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THE OFFICE OF INTENDANT IN NEW FRANCE

A STUDY IN FRENCH COLONIAL POLICY

As one dips into the voluminous documentary data available for the study of French colonization and French colonial institutions in North America, one's initial impression is that of prodigious official activity. The hand of authority appears everywhere, restlessly thrusting itself into every department of colonial life—ordering, directing, or restraining. A hierarchy of officials, formidable in number, is seen issuing edicts, ordinances, declarations, decrees, and judgments with a profusion that is ominous and bewildering.¹ It is not strange, therefore, that students of the French régime in the New World have recoiled from the task of attempting to define precisely the position and powers of the various administrative officials; for the multitude of their jurisdictions appear at first sight to be inextricably dovetailed, and the limits of their several activities hopelessly overlapped. The sage De Tocqueville has somewhere remarked that in the days of the old dominion the administration took the place of Providence. One might add that at any rate it seemed almost as omnipresent if not always as omniscient, and that its ways were frequently as inscrutable.

This paternal system had its myriad of agents of all ranks, jurisdictions, and qualities, all vying in the activity of their administrative energies, and encroaching upon the apparent jurisdictions of one another in a way which seems almost to preclude any exact definition of their proper positions and functions. Against this somewhat kaleidoscopic background, however, one figure stands silhouetted with tolerable clearness—that of the intendant, at once the most active and the most characteristic royal officer of the prerevolutionary era. In New France as in Old, this special custodian of the royal absolutism filled a post which is capable of being described with some exactness, and exercised powers which are susceptible of definition.

For a proper understanding of the position and functions of the colonial intendant, a word or two must be said as to the origin

¹ The *Registres du Conseil Souverain et du Conseil Supérieur de Québec*, from September 18, 1663, to April 8, 1760, fill no less than fifty-six ponderous manuscript volumes; the *Ordonnances des Intendants du Canada* make up the contents of forty-four more; and there are in addition thirty-six volumes of minor decrees and judgments.

and importance of the intendancy in France. During the century and a half preceding the Revolution the main administrative division of France was the *généralité*, a unit usually but not necessarily coextensive with the province. At the head of this division was placed a royal official, the Intendant of Justice, Police, and Finance, armed with very extensive administrative powers, distinguished by his loyalty to the interests of the king, and in a sense reflecting the absolutism of the monarchy. Within his *généralité* the intendant was bound by no hard and fast statutes or regulations, and he owed no obedience to any local authorities: he was appointed by, removable by, and responsible to the king alone. When he took office his powers were given him in the form of a royal commission; and these powers might be widened or narrowed from time to time by special instructions from the crown. Usually, however, both the commission and the instructions were couched in very general terms; and, reliance being placed upon the judgment and fidelity of the official, he was left to carry out their spirit as local conditions might seem to dictate.¹ To an outsider the intendant's powers might well appear portentous, as they did to the observant Scotchman, John Law, who remarked to D'Argenson, "Let me tell you that this kingdom of France is governed by its thirty intendants . . . on whom, so far as the provinces are concerned, welfare and want, prosperity and adversity, absolutely depend."

But how, one may ask, came this centralization of local administration into the intendant's hands? By a somewhat curious but very persistent error the origin and early development of the intendant's office has been commonly attributed to Richelieu.² Such an attribution was once not without reason; for even by some of his contemporaries the great cardinal was regarded as sponsor for the system of provincial intendancies, and the idea that he created and developed the office would fit very nicely with his well-known

¹ Charles Godard, *Les Pouvoirs des Intendants sous Louis XIV.* (Paris, 1901), ch. II.

² The error may be found even in the most recent publications. "Ces fonctionnaires firent leur apparition durant la première moitié du XVII^{ème} siècle. Ce fut Richelieu qui les créa" (Thomas Chapais, *Jean Talon, Intendant de la Nouvelle-France*, Quebec, 1904, p. 18). "An even more effective instrument of royal control was afterwards created in the form of the intendants. Dating in their beginning from the middle of the sixteenth century, reintroduced by Henry IV. in his reconstruction of France after the religious wars, these officials were settled upon by Richelieu in the period between 1624 and 1641 as the principal agents and representatives of royal power" (E. P. Cheyney, *European Background of American History*, New York, 1904, p. 117).

general policy of administrative centralization.¹ Furthermore, the so-called "Édit de Création des Intendants" (1635), published in Isambert's *Recueil Général des Anciennes Lois Françaises*,² seemed definitely to indicate the genesis of the office. Almost half a century ago, however, a careful investigator demonstrated beyond question that the edict of 1635 had been printed under a misleading title by the editor of the collection in which it was contained; that the intendency was in existence long before the time of Richelieu; and that its powers were so well developed by the first quarter of the seventeenth century that the cardinal-minister could have found but little to add to them.³ On the contrary, if the *Testament Politique* is to be regarded as Richelieu's legacy of political theory, he would seem, far from having created or developed the office, to have had in truth a very poor opinion of it and to have been actually in favor of curbing its jurisdiction.⁴

The provincial intendency was, therefore, no spontaneous and arbitrary creation, dating back, as some writers have supposed, only three decades before its transplantation to New France.⁵ It was a very old post, and in its origin a not very important one, the jurisdiction of which grew slowly but surely in a general atmosphere of centralization, its widening powers simply reflecting with fidelity the steadily increasing fusion of administrative functions under the direct control of the crown.⁶

The office of intendant first made its appearance in connection with the affairs of New France in the spring of 1663. The colony had just been taken away from the Company of One Hundred Associates; and the king, on the advice of Colbert, had decided to provide it with a new framework of government modelled in general upon that of a French province. To this end an elaborate edict constituting the new administration was issued in April, 1663.⁷ By it provision was made for the establishment in New France of a Sovereign Council (*conseil souverain*), to be composed in the first instance of seven members: a lieutenant-general and governor

¹ Cf. the *Mémoires* of Séguier and of Omer Talon, cited by Gabriel Hanotaux in his *Origines de l'Institution des Intendants des Provinces* (Paris, 1901), 152-153.

² Paris, 1822-1833, XVI. 442 et seqq.

³ Jules Cailliet, *De l'Administration en France sous le Ministère du Cardinal de Richelieu* (Paris, 1857), 44 et seqq.

⁴ Richelieu, *Testament Politique* (Amsterdam, 1688), pt. 1., ch. iv., §§ iii, iv.

⁵ James Douglas, *Old France in the New World* (Cleveland, 1905), 507.

⁶ Allen Johnson, *The Intendant as a Political Agent under Louis XIV.* (Lowell, Mass., 1899), ch. 1.

⁷ "Édit de création du conseil supérieur de Québec", *Édits et Ordonnances*, I. 37-39.

appointed by the crown, the bishop or other head of the church in the colony, and five other members, presumably colonials, appointed jointly (*conjointement et de concert*) by the governor and bishop.¹ The council was to have the assistance and advice of an attorney-general, but as to the right of this officer to a seat at the council-board the edict is not clear.

Contrary to the common assertion of historians, the edict of April, 1663, made no mention of a colonial intendant; but there is good reason to believe that the king and his ministers intended to send such an official to Canada, and had in fact already selected the first appointee. About a month before the edict was issued, one M. Robert had been duly commissioned as intendant of New France. The commission of Robert was never enregistered in the records at Quebec, and it is certain that he never came out to the colony. In fact, I have found no evidence that he ever performed any official act. There was, however, sent out to New France in 1663 a special royal commissioner, the Sieur Gaudais-Dupont, who was directed by the terms of his commission to study closely the administration of justice, the methods of maintaining law and order, and the existing arrangements for the raising of revenue.² The commission of this official gave him a seat and a vote in the Sovereign Council, where he was to take precedence immediately after the bishop.³ Gaudais remained at Quebec but a short time, returning in the following year to France, where he made a report of his investigations to the king.

It was at this point that colonial affairs took a new and sudden shift. The royal administration had no more than firmly established itself in the province when, under the auspices of Colbert, a powerful commercial company known as the Company of the West Indies was organized, and to this company was given a trading monopoly throughout all the domains of France in the western world.⁴ In these territories the new company was empowered to appoint "such governors" as might be deemed "requisite",⁵ and "to name judges and officers of justice wherever need be";

¹ As the governor and bishop found themselves unable to agree in the selection, the king soon took the appointment of councillors into his own hands. In 1675 the number of appointive councillors was increased from five to seven (*ibid.*, 83), and in 1703 a further increase to twelve was ordered (*ibid.*, 299).

² "Commission octroyée au Sieur Gaudais pour aller examiner le pays de la Nouvelle-France", May 7, 1663, *ibid.*, III. 22-23.

³ Gaudais never, as Kingsford (*History of Canada*, I. 306) seems to suppose, had the title of intendant.

⁴ "Établissement de la Compagnie des Indes Occidentales", *Édits et Ordonnances*, I. 40-48.

⁵ *Ibid.*, § xxvi.

and it was also expressly authorized "to establish sovereign councils" in such places as might be "necessary".¹ Although the company was thus clearly invested with jurisdiction over the territory of New France, it does not appear to have exercised any of its political powers. It is said to have prayed the king to make the political appointments himself; but of such action the commissions of the officials give no evidence, and it is altogether probable that the company was not even consulted with reference to any of the colonial appointments.² The attitude of the intendant Talon toward the company would seem to show that he was under no obligation to it for his nomination to the post which he held.³

Thus it was that, during the ten years intervening between the establishment and the fall of this company (1664-1674), the situation in New France presented a strange dualism. By its charter the company had been authorized to name the officials of administration and of justice, but as a matter of fact the king kept this power jealously to himself. By its charter it was empowered to make land grants, but in practice such grants were made only by the royal officials. In short, the Bourbon monarch took away with one hand what he gave with the other; and the company, with all its portentous charter powers, secured little more than a monopoly of the colonial fur-trade. The failure to realize clearly this curious divergence between the law and the facts of the situation has served to mislead more than one student of the institutions that existed under the old régime.

The first intendant actually to enter upon the duties of his office in New France was Jean Talon, whose commission bears date of March 23, 1665; and from this time down to the period of the French withdrawal from Canada the post was filled continuously, with the exception of the three years intervening between the departure of Talon in 1672 and the arrival of Duchesneau in 1675.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, § XXXI.

² Charlevoix, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France* (Paris, 1744), I. 379-380, says that the king appointed the first governor and intendant at the suggestion of the company; but this assertion scarcely tallies with the fact that M. de Mézy and M. Louis Robert were appointed governor and intendant respectively by commissions dated almost a year before the company was chartered. See *Édits et Ordonnances*, I. 33; III. 21.

³ In one of his despatches Talon wrote, "If His Majesty wishes to make anything of Canada, he will never succeed unless he withdraws it from the hands of the company . . ." (Talon to Colbert, October 14, 1665, *Correspondance Générale*, II. 248).

⁴ The list of intendants of New France, with the dates of their commissions, is as follows:

Louis Robert, of whose commission no record has been found, but who must have been appointed prior to March 21, 1663, for his name appears as intendant

Each intendant received from the king a commission of appointment setting forth his jurisdiction and powers; this he presented at the first meeting of the council after his arrival, when it was

in a royal edict of that date (*Édits et Ordonnances*, I. 33). M. Robert, as has been stated, did not come out to the colony.

Jean Talon, commission dated March 23, 1665, registered at Quebec on September 23 following. Talon left the colony in the autumn of 1668 and remained in France until the summer of 1670. He went back to France again in the fall of 1672, the king having accepted his request to be relieved of his post.

Claude de Bouteroue, commission dated April 18, 1668, registered at Quebec on October 22 following. As Bouteroue was sent to the colony to act as intendant during the absence of Talon, he gave up his post on the return of the latter in 1670.

Jacques Duchesneau, commission dated June 5, 1675, registered at Quebec on September 16 following. Duchesneau was recalled, leaving the colony for France on May 9, 1682.

Jacques de Meulles, commission dated May 1, 1682, registered at Quebec on October 9 following. Meulles left the colony during the first week of October, 1686.

Jean Bochart de Champigny, commission dated April 24, 1686, registered at Quebec on September 23 following. Champigny went home to France in October, 1702.

François de Beauharnois, commission dated April 1, 1702, registered at Quebec on October 15 following. Beauharnois left Quebec in the autumn of 1705.

Jacques Raudot, commission dated January 1, 1705, registered at Quebec on September 17 following. On the same date Antoine-Denis Raudot, his son, was commissioned "to serve as adjoint and to act as intendant in case his father should be ill or otherwise incapacitated or should be absent from Quebec a distance of more than ten leagues". The younger Raudot returned to France in 1710, whither his father followed him a year later.

Michel Bégon, commission dated March 31, 1710, registered at Quebec on October 14, 1712. Bégon's departure for the colony was delayed by the death of his father. After twelve years' service he was promoted to the intendency of Havre, and left Quebec in 1724.

Edmé-Nicolas Robert, commissioned February 22, 1724. M. Robert died at sea en route to his post; hence his commission does not appear on the council registers at Quebec.

Guillaume de Chazelles, commissioned in the spring of 1725. Chazelles left Rochefort in July of the same year on board the frigate *Le Chameau*. The vessel, however, getting badly out of her course, was wrecked near Louisbourg, whence news of the disaster was sent to Quebec, and thence to France.

Claude Thomas Dupuy, commission dated November 23, 1725, registered at Quebec on September 2, 1726. Dupuy returned to France in October, 1728.

Gilles Hocquart, commissioned commissary-general and acting intendant of New France on March 8, 1729. Two years later, February 21, 1731, he was promoted to the intendency by a commission registered at Quebec on August 20 following. Hocquart returned to France in 1749, having been appointed intendant at Brest.

François Bigot, commission dated January 1, 1748, registered at Quebec on September 2 following. Bigot left the colony, with the other officials and the troops, in 1760.

During the interval between the departure of Jacques Raudot and the arrival of Bégon, M. d'Aigremont performed the duties of the intendency; and later, on the departure of Dupuy, d'Aigremont again assumed charge, but died before the

ordered to be enregistered.¹ The commissions differed somewhat from one another, but in general they disclosed a broad line of uniformity. The phraseology was strikingly similar to that adopted in the commissions of the provincial intendants in France during the same period, but there were some important differences in the nature and scope of the powers conferred.² Invariably the commissions were couched in such general terms that, were one to judge solely by the wording, one would be quickly forced to the conclusion that the intendant was the real agent of administration in the colony, and might well question what scope could possibly be left for the numerous other officers. To Talon, for example, was given the somewhat comprehensive authority to order everything as might seem "just and proper".³ With the commission, however, usually went a letter of instructions from the minister, which, together with subsequent instructions that might be sent out from time to time, gave specific directions on various matters. Not infrequently these instructions limited the powers conferred in the intendant's commission of appointment; and occasionally they were quite inconsistent with the terms of the commission. They were not registered, but were kept privately by the intendant for his own guidance.⁴

The intendants of New France were not appointed for any definite term of years; they held office during the royal pleasure. In practice the terms varied considerably. Talon held his post for five years only, Meulles for four, Bouteroue and Dupuy for but two years each; on the other hand, Bégon was intendant of New France for twelve years, Champigny for sixteen, and Hocquart for eighteen. There seems to have been no aim to make the term a fixed one; for elasticity and complete dependence upon the will of the king were in the colony, as at home, the essential features of the office. During a period of almost a century (1665-1760) eleven intendants assumed their duties in the colony; hence the

arrival of Hocquart. In the meantime M. de Silly acted as intendant. Between the departure of Hocquart and the arrival of Bigot, M. Michel exercised the functions of the office.

The foregoing list is given in full because, so far as I am aware, no complete and accurate table of the intendants of New France, with the dates of their commissions and of their departures, has hitherto been printed.

¹ The various commissions are printed in *Édits et Ordonnances*, III. 21-81.

² Cf. the typical intendant's commission printed in Godard, *Les Pouvoirs des Intendants sous Louis XIV.*, 455-458.

³ "Et de tout ordonner ainsi que vous verrez être juste et à propos." *Édits et Ordonnances*, III. 34.

⁴ Many of these letters of instruction are preserved in the Correspondance Générale.

average term of tenure was about eight and one-half years.¹ Some of them might have remained in office longer had they so desired—as, for example, Talon or Raudot; others, as Duchesneau and Dupuy, were recalled by the king because of some dissatisfaction with their work in office.

In every case the intendant was sent out from France: no colonial was ever named to the post.² The office does not seem to have been regarded as a lucrative or an agreeable one, for the work was heavy and the responsibilities were great. The remuneration too was so ridiculously small—usually twelve thousand livres per year—that various intendants complained bitterly of their inability to make both ends meet on this allowance, especially in view of the high cost of living at Quebec.³ Down to 1685 the intendant provided his own living quarters, and usually transacted his official business in the council-room at the palace of the governor; but this arrangement was so unsatisfactory that, at the urgent solicitation of Meulles in 1685, the king furnished funds with which the intendant might secure quarters of his own. A large building which had been originally built by Talon as a brewery was accordingly purchased, and, after being partly rebuilt, was called by the pretentious name of Palais de Justice.⁴ Henceforth the intendants lived in this roomy structure, and here the council usually held its sessions. The abundant opportunities which the intendants had of supplementing their meagre stipend by private trade was naturally a severe tax upon their integrity. Most of them, however, seem to have looked upon the colonial post as a stepping-stone to something better at home, and consequently strove so to conduct themselves as to win the favor and reward of the crown. In this hope those who served the king well were not disappointed: Bégon was promoted to the intendency at Havre in 1724, Hocquart to the same post at Brest in 1749, and several others were continued in the royal service after their return to France.⁵

Without exception the intendants of New France were men who had served their king in some civil capacity before coming to

¹ During the same period there were twelve governors, with terms ranging from three to twenty-three years.

² Of the governors only one, Vaudreuil de Cavagnal, was born in Canada. Most of the minor positions, however, were given to residents of the colony.

³ The remuneration was not fixed in a lump sum, but was made up of different items.

⁴ The building was burned in 1713, but was promptly rebuilt. The king sent Bégon three thousand livres to recompense him for personal losses sustained in the fire.

⁵ Régis Roy, "Les Intendants de la Nouvelle-France; Notes sur leurs Familles", in Société Royale du Canada, *Mémoires*, 2e Série, IX. 63-107.

the colony. France had at this time no colonial civil service, but chose her colonial officials from among the members of the royal service at home.¹ Usually those appointed to the Canadian intendancy were drawn from the ranks of the lesser nobility, the *gens de robe*, or the *bourgeoisie*.² They were men who had entered the service at an early age, and had been promoted as the result of tested fidelity to the interests of the monarchy and of industry shown in office. As no one, with the single exception of Talon, seems to have held a provincial intendancy in France before coming to Canada, it may be presumed that the post of intendant in New France was less to be desired than the headship of a small *généralité* at home. Of the other colonial intendants, Bégon had been director of stores at Rochefort, Raudot a member of the board of excise (*cour des aides*), Duchesneau royal treasurer at Tours, Dupuy advocate-general of the royal council, and Bigot commissary of the military forces at Louisburg. The others are referred to in their respective commissions as having served the king faithfully "in the various offices" heretofore held by them.³ All of them proved to be men of more than ordinary ability, and some of them displayed unusual qualities of administration and statesmanship. While one of the number may justly be pilloried as a rogue, none showed himself incapable—a statement which can scarcely be made with truth in regard to the dozen governors of the old régime.⁴

We have the word of De Tocqueville that the duties and powers of the Canadian intendant were far wider than those of his prototype at home.⁵ In one sense the philosopher-historian is probably correct; for, while the authority given to the intendant of New France was not, judged by the terms of his commission and instructions, so extensive as that given to a provincial intendant at home, the distance of three thousand miles which separate Quebec from Versailles necessarily involved the exercise of wider discretionary powers by the colonial official. In France protests against the action of an intendant could be laid before the higher authorities and a decision be rendered within a few days, or at most a few

¹ To this fact a later student of French colonial policy attributes many of the capital errors of the old régime. See Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la Colonisation chez les Peuples Modernes* (Paris, 1891, 4th ed.), 450-451.

² Five of the colonial intendants were born in Touraine, two each in Bourgogne and Orléanais, one each in Hainaut, Poitou, Auvergne, Champagne, and Guyenne; cf. Roy, "Les Intendants", 66.

³ See the various commissions in *Édits et Ordonnances*, III. 21 et seqq.

⁴ Governors De la Barre and De Denonville may be singled out as strikingly incapable.

⁵ "An intendant far more powerful than his colleagues in France". De Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution* (New York, 1876), 299, note f.

weeks; but from any act of the colonial intendant appeals could be forwarded only by the ships which left in the autumn of each year, and the royal decision could not be had until the year following. The independence enjoyed by the colonial intendant was therefore much greater than that allowed to any similar officer at home.

Owing to the broad scope of the duties and powers of the intendant of New France, it is not easy to summarize them succinctly; but it may simplify matters somewhat to group them under two main heads: (1) those which he had as a member of the council, and (2) those which he had as an independent official.

1. As has been pointed out, the edict creating the council made no provision that the intendant should have a seat in the new body; but the commissions of the various intendants supplied this omission. From 1663 to 1675 the governor presided at the meetings of the council, the bishop ranked next to him, and the intendant third; but in the latter year the king, for some unexplained reason, ordered that henceforth the intendant should preside at the meetings, although retaining the third place of precedence on all other official occasions.¹ The new intendant, Duchesneau, however, who came out to Quebec in the same year, complicated the matter somewhat by bringing with him a commission which gave him the right to preside only when the governor happened to be absent.² Governor Frontenac therefore refused to yield his place at the head of the table to the new intendant, especially since the king and the minister continued to address him in their instructions as "chief and president of the council".³ Pending a reference of the matter to the king, a somewhat undignified squabble ensued between governor and intendant. The king, however, promptly decided in favor of the intendant's contention, pointing out that the wording of the edict of 1675 was perfectly plain, and reprimanding Frontenac severely for having "set up pretensions entirely opposed" to this royal decree.⁴ Henceforth the intendants presided at the council meetings and exercised the usual powers of a presiding officer, taking the votes, signing the records, and calling special meetings.

Although possessing but a single vote in a body of ten (and

¹ "Nous voulons que l'intendant de justice, police et finances, lequel dans l'ordre ci-dessus aura la troisième place comme président du dit conseil . . . jouisse des mêmes avantages que les premiers présidents de nos cours . . ." *Édits et Ordonnances*, I. 84.

² "Présider au conseil souverain en l'absence du dit sieur de Frontenac." *Ibid.*, III. 42.

³ Colbert to Frontenac, May 12, 1678, *Correspondance Générale*, IV. 144.

⁴ King to Frontenac, April 29, 1680, *ibid.*, V. 190. See also *Édits et Ordonnances*, I. 238.

later of fifteen) members, the intendant had really a very considerable power at the council-board; for the members of the council usually grouped themselves into two factions, one of which looked to him as its leader. This was especially true during the first three or four decades following the establishment of the conciliar administration, when the interests of religion and commerce in the colony came into conflict, and the question of the liquor traffic with the Indians split the colonial population into two hostile camps. With a majority of the councillors behind him, the intendant was in a position absolutely to dominate the civil affairs of the colony.

2. More important, however, were the duties and powers of the intendant as an independent administrative and judicial officer. In this field he was not a subordinate of the governor, nor were his actions subject to review by the council; his responsibility was to the king alone.¹ His communications and reports did not have to pass through the hands of the governor, but were made directly to the minister—a privilege which was looked upon as affording a good link in the chain of checks and balances. One result was, of course, that when the governor and the intendant quarrelled they flayed each other unmercifully in their despatches to their common superiors.² While it was essential to the progress and quiet of the colony that the two officials should not come into a too violent antagonism, it may reasonably be inferred from the tenor of their instructions that the complete harmony of the two officials was neither

¹ The respective jurisdictions of governor and intendant in the colony were never precisely defined by any royal edict, though the issue of such would have prevented many of the disagreements which arose from time to time between the two officials. In the *Correspondance Générale* is preserved an interesting document entitled, "Difficulté qu'il plaira à M. le Marquis de Seignelay de décider sur les fonctions de gouverneur et intendant de Canada". This document comprises a list of questions evidently submitted to the king in 1684, with the answers of His Majesty written in the margin. One of these answers is as follows: "Sur le fait de la guerre et des armes le gouverneur doit ordonner ce qu'il estimera à propos. Et pour ce qui est de la justice et de la police à l'égard des sauvages meslez avec les François l'intendant et le conseil souverain en doivent connoistre. Sa Majesté ne veut pas que l'intendant donne aucun ordre aux gouverneurs, mais quand il'y a quelque choses qui regarde le bien de son service il peut leur escrire et les gouverneurs a cet egard doivent suivre ses avis" (April 10, 1684, *Correspondance Générale*, VI. 322). The governor, nevertheless, sometimes claimed the right to intervene in purely civil matters. On one occasion Governor Courcelle wrote on the margin of an ordinance passed by the council, and relating wholly to a civil matter, the following terse comment: "Cette Ordonnance estant contre l'autorité du Gouverneur et bien public, je ne l'ay pas voulu signer" (*Jugements et Délibérations du Conseil Souverain de la Nouvelle-France*, Quebec, 1885, I. 448).

² See the despatches of Frontenac and Duchesneau during the years 1678-1682, in *Correspondance Générale*, V.

expected nor regarded as desirable.¹ This system of using one official as a check or spy upon his colleagues is abundantly characteristic of the general spirit of the period of French dominion in Canada.

During the earlier part of the period it was the custom of the intendant to send home by the returning ships, in the autumn of each year, reports on the general condition of affairs in New France. These papers dealt with almost every phase of colonial life and were frequently of formidable length. Single despatches not infrequently covered thirty or forty closely-written folio pages, and it sometimes happened that an intendant would send three or four reports by the same vessel. These numerous "*Mémoires sur l'État présent du Canada*", as they were called, form an invaluable source of data for the study of French colonization in North America. The minister or his subordinates went carefully through them, and, in case of the more lengthy ones, made abstracts for the personal perusal of the king. His Majesty then made marginal comments, which formed the basis of despatches sent by the minister to the intendant in the following spring. These marginal notes testify not only to the deep personal interest which Louis XIV. took in even the minor affairs of his colony beyond the seas, but also to the industry and patience of the Grand Monarch.²

As the colony grew in population and interests the policy of sending reports once a year was abandoned, and shorter communications on special topics were sent by the intendant whenever opportunity afforded. About once a year, or perhaps less frequently, he supplemented these special despatches by a comprehensive "*Mémoire*" on colonial affairs in general; and very frequently he united with the governor in a joint report. After the death of Louis XIV. the communications of the colonial officials appear not to have received the same careful attention as formerly; but the successive intendants continued their despatches of pitiless length, filling them with details of colonial progress amidst difficulties which they in no wise minimized, with suggestions, criticisms, requests, and, not infrequently, with rather curious laudations of their own personal services. Often interesting, but more often thoroughly tiresome, these despatches con-

¹ Cf. "*Instructions au Sieur Talon*", March 27, 1665. A copy of this document may be found in the Parkman Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

² When the French left Canada in 1759 they took with them the confidential archives. These were deposited in the Ministère de la Marine. At the present time this enormous mass of manuscript documents, comprising substantially all the instructions, despatches, abstracts, etc., is preserved in the Archives of the Minister of Colonies, Pavillon de Flore, in the south wing of the Louvre in Paris. A considerable portion of the whole has been transcribed by the Canadian Archives Branch at Ottawa, and constitutes the collection known as the *Correspondance Générale*.

tain a wealth of data which no student of the institutions of France in America can afford to neglect.

Apart from his duty of reporting to his superiors on all matters of interest in the colony, the intendant, as an independent royal representative, had a plenitude of special duties and powers. A convenient method of classifying these is suggested by his exact title, Intendant of Justice, Police, and Finances.¹ Under the general heads of judicial, police, and financial powers, then, some approach to a definite analysis of the intendant's prerogatives may be made.

Judicial Powers.—The intendant's powers and duties in relation to the administration of justice in the colony may be grouped into two subdivisions, which may be termed general and special judicial authority. In the first place, he was by the terms of his commission entrusted with a general supervision over the hierarchy of colonial courts. The power of appointing or of removing the regular inferior judges and judicial officers was not, indeed, vested in his hands. The royal judges at Quebec, Montreal, and Three Rivers held their appointments from the king, as did the attorneys and clerks connected with these royal courts;² and seigniorial judges were appointed by the seigniors. The intendant was, however, by the terms of his commission instructed to keep close watch on the doings of all these officers, and was authorized to intervene whenever it was necessary to prevent miscarriage of justice. This was not an easy thing to do, especially since the officials of justice were not responsible to him. One intendant complained bitterly of his real lack of authority over the royal judge at Quebec: "I can do nothing with him", he wrote, "for he keeps on good terms with the governor and council and pays no heed to me."³ By the terms of his commission, moreover, the intendant was empowered to call before him litigation from the lower courts; but when Meulles undertook to do this he received from the king a sharp reprimand, and was instructed that for the future this policy was not to be pursued.⁴ This frequent contradiction between the commission and the instructions of the intendant is one of the confusing obstacles to any clear and precise definition of his judicial powers. The intendant might, moreover,

¹ The full title of the intendant was "Intendant de la Justice, Police et Finances en Canada, Acadie, Isle de Terre-Neuve et autres pays de la France Septentrionale". This title was uniform in the commissions of all the intendants except the last, Bigot, whose commission designated him as "Intendant de la Justice, Police et Finances en Canada, la Louisiane et dans toutes les terres et isles dépendantes de la Nouvelle-France". See *Édits et Ordonnances*, III. 75.

² The commissions of these officials may be found *ibid.*, 82 *et seqq.*

³ Meulles to Minister, November 12, 1684, *Correspondance Générale*, VI. 273.

⁴ "Instruction pour le Sieur de Meulles", July 31, 1684, *ibid.*, 39.

have the attorney-general call a case before the council and have it there adjudicated; but the attorney-general did not always hold himself at the beck and call of the intendant in such matters. Meulles on one occasion complained bitterly that this official had become "bold to insolence", and that there was need of teaching him his proper place and duties.¹ At the same time, there were a good many removals of cases from the lower courts to the higher in order to prevent delays or denials of justice.

More definite were the special judicial powers of the intendant. He took cognizance, in the first instance, of all criminal cases of a serious nature, especially of treason, sedition, or counterfeiting, and of those in which the crown was supposed to have a special concern. He had charge of all contestations relating to trade and commerce, exercising in this sphere the powers of the *juges consuls* in France.² Disputes between seigniors and their dependents as to the nature and extent of seigniorial rights came, either directly or from the seigniorial courts, before the intendant or his subdelegates (*sub-délégés*); and of such controversies there was assuredly no dearth, as the recorded judgments of the intendants show.³ In dealing with these cases the intendant was supposed to follow the terms of the *coutume de Paris*, which had been prescribed as the "common law" of the colony in 1664; but some of the intendants allowed themselves a good deal of latitude in adjudicating cases.⁴ Talon, Raudot, Hocquart, and others strove earnestly to discourage litigation but without any striking degree of success, for the Norman habitant was usually combative in disposition.⁵ The rather loose manner in which property rights were defined, moreover, often invited disputes.⁶

No fees were charged in the intendant's court; the suitors pleaded their own causes without the intervention of attorneys, and

¹ Meulles to Minister, November 12, 1684, Corr. Générale, 273.

² "L'intendant exerçait la juridiction consulaire par lui-même et probablement aussi par ses subdélégés". P. J. O. Chauveau, *Notice sur la Publication des Registres du Conseil Souverain* (Quebec, 1885), p. liv, note.

³ These judgments are printed in *Édits et Ordonnances*, II. 423 et seqq.

⁴ See *ibid.*, I. 46, § xxxiii. See also the "Commission d'Intendant . . . pour M. Bigot", January 1, 1748, *ibid.*, III. 75-76. The wording is, "juger toutes matières . . . conformément à nos édits et ordonnances, et à la coutume de notre bonne ville, prévôté et vicomté de Paris".

⁵ As one writer has aptly put it, the habitant had "beaucoup de chaleur dans la discussion des intérêts privés, et de calme dans celle des intérêts publics". Joseph Bouchette, *British Dominions in North America* (London, 1832), I. 414, note.

⁶ Raudot in one of his despatches declared that "if all those who might avail themselves of their litigious spirit were allowed to bring lawsuits, there would soon be more suits in this country than there are persons". Raudot to Pontchartrain, November 10, 1707, Correspondance Générale, XXVI. 9-10.

the procedure was very simple.¹ Decision was given in the form of a decree, which was communicated to the parties concerned. When any considerable number of parties were interested, the decree was usually ordered to be read to the parishioners after mass or to be affixed to the door of the parish church.² To this end the intendant communicated such ordinances to the *capitaine de la milice* of the parish or *côte*, an official who acted as the local agent of the Quebec authorities and whose duty it was, among other things, to see to the publication and enforcement of decrees issued by the proper higher authorities.

The intendant was empowered to appoint subdelegates with jurisdiction in petty civil cases in which the amount in dispute did not exceed one hundred livres.³ These officials likewise supervised the enforcement of the police regulations which the intendant promulgated from time to time, and they tried minor criminal cases. Subdelegates were maintained at Quebec, Montreal, and Three Rivers; but from their decisions appeals might at any time be taken to the intendant. From the decisions of the intendant there was always a right of appeal to the Council of State in France; but as it was always a year or more before the opinion of the Council of State could be had on such appeals, the judgments of the intendant were usually accepted as final.

Police Powers.—Although the colonial intendant was a judicial officer of considerable authority, his main duties were not judicial but administrative. He was authorized to issue, in concurrence with the council, such general police regulations as might be deemed necessary; but, when the council's concurrence could be had only with difficulty or delay, the intendant was empowered to issue on his own responsibility such regulations as he thought demanded by the public interest.⁴ This "police power" comprised not only matters directly connected with the maintenance of law and order in the colony, but all matters relating to the protection of life and property, to the public health, and to the carrying on of trade and

¹ "Everybody pleads his own cause. Our Themis is prompt, and she does not bristle with fees, costs, and charges." Lahontan, *Voyages* (Amsterdam, 1705), I. 21.

² Cf. *Édits et Ordonnances*, II. 429.

³ G. Doutre and E. Lareau, *Le Droit Civil Canadien*, I., *Histoire Générale du Droit Canadien* (Montreal, 1872), 133.

⁴ "Faire avec le dit conseil souverain tous les réglemens que vous estimerez nécessaires pour la police générale du dit pays . . . ; et en cas que vous estimiez plus à propos et nécessaire pour le bien de notre service, soit par la difficulté ou le retardement de faire les dits réglemens avec le dit conseil, nous vous donnons le pouvoir et faculté par ces mêmes présentes de les faire seul." *Édits et Ordonnances*, III. 42-43.

industry, in fact all regulations demanded by the general paternal policy of the administration. In the exercise of these powers, all the intendants issued many ordinances without the assistance of the council, some providing general restrictions, others those designed to meet local conditions and applying only to certain persons or localities. Taken all together, these "Ordonnances des Intendants du Canada" make a formidable collection numbering well up into the hundreds. The matters with which they deal are of the widest variety, embracing almost every phase of colonial life from the most important to the most trivial. An ordinance establishing a system of weights and measures in the colony shares space with another forbidding coasting in winter along the hilly streets of Quebec. Various decrees deal with such matters as the holding of negro slaves, the regulation of inns and markets, the preservation of game, the building of houses and fences, furious driving, Sabbath observance, precedence at religious services, wills and testaments, stray cattle, guardianship of minors, and almost every imaginable topic. Nothing seems to have been accounted too trivial to merit an ordinance.¹ On the other hand, the council stood sponsor for many "Règlements" drafted by the intendant. In 1676 it promulgated a lengthy and comprehensive code of police regulations,² and from time to time supplemented this by ordinances on special subjects.

From time to time the intendant was charged by his instructions with special police duties and powers. One duty which was committed to him at an early date was that of fostering a rapid increase in the colonial population. He was instructed to receive the settlers sent out from France, to secure them locations, to get the single ones married, and to see that none went back to Europe. He supervised the distribution of bounties which the king gave to those colonists who married early and reared large families; and, on the other hand, he enforced the royal penalties imposed for obdurate celibacy.³ "The end and rule of all your conduct", wrote Colbert to Bouteroue, "should be the increase of the colony; on this point you should never be satisfied, but labor without ceasing to find every imaginable expedient for preserving the inhabitants, attracting new ones, and multiplying them by marriage".⁴ The

¹ These ordinances will be found in *Édits et Ordonnances*, II. and III.

² "Règlements généraux du Conseil Supérieur de Québec, pour la Police", May 11, 1676, *ibid.*, II. 65-73.

³ "Arrêt du Conseil d'État du Roi pour encourager les mariages des garçons et des filles de Canada", *ibid.*, I. 67-68.

⁴ "Instruction pour M. Claude de Bouteroue", 1668, in Parkman Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

first of the intendants had devoted himself so zealously to this work, and had clamored so persistently for more settlers, that Colbert found it necessary to remind him that it was not the royal design to depopulate France in order to people Canada.¹ The wish of the king was that the colony should be made to grow from within by the application of artificial stimulants; when it did not respond, the intendant was forced to bear the blame. On one occasion the king reminded Duchesneau that, if he failed in this particular, he might regard himself as having failed in the principal object for which he had been sent to the colony.²

The working of the seigniorial system of land tenure was another matter committed to the special police care of the intendant. From 1666 to 1676 all grants of seigniories had been made by the intendant alone. On a few occasions, while Talon was absent in France, the governor had made provisional grants, but these were promptly ratified by the intendant on his return to the colony. In 1676, however, a change was made by a royal edict which provided that for the future all grants of seigniories should be made by the governor and intendant jointly. These two were to consider together all applications, and to decide whether the previous status of any incoming settler was such as to entitle him to the grant of a colonial fief, or whether he should, on the other hand, be referred to some colonial seignior for a small *en censive* grant.³ Nevertheless, the relations of the seigniorial proprietors to the crown continued wholly within the special jurisdiction of the intendant. He was supposed to see that the seigniors paid their quint⁴ into the royal treasury at Quebec when it became due, and that they respected the various reservations which had been inserted in their title-deeds.⁵ He was entrusted with the enforcement of the various edicts which compelled the seigniors to grant lands to incoming settlers at the usual rates without exacting a bonus for favorable locations,⁶ which ordered them to build seigniorial mills on pain of forfeiting for all future

¹ Colbert to Talon, February 20, 1668, *ibid.*

² King (unsigned) to Duchesneau, June 2, 1680, Correspondance Générale, V. 197.

³ *Édits et Ordonnances*, I. 89-90. When the two officials disagreed, the question was to be referred to the king. *Ibid.*, 572-574.

⁴ A mutation fine equal to one-fifth of the value of the seignior, payable on the occasion of any change in ownership. It was the custom in New France to allow seigniors a rebate of one-third. See F. J. Cugnet, *Traité de la Loi des Fiefs* (Quebec, 1775), 11.

⁵ Such, for example, as the reservation of all oak timber suitable for use in the royal shipyards. On one occasion the intendant appointed officials to go about from seignior to seignior to see that this reservation was respected. See *Édits et Ordonnances*, III. 469.

⁶ Especially the famous "Arrêts of Marly", 1711, *ibid.*, I. 324-325.

time their banal rights, to file plans (*aveu et dénombrement*) of their seigniories, and so on. On the other hand, the intendant was expected to uphold the seignior in the enforcement of all his rightful claims; and his intervention to compel censitaires to render their just dues and services was sought on frequent occasions. One finds a large number of ordinances directing censitaires to pay their *rentes*, to render their *corvées*, to carry their grain exclusively to the seigniorial mill, to exhibit their titles for the seignior's inspection—ordinances, in short, relating to almost every incident which might be a matter of dispute between the seigniors and their dependents.¹

But while the intendant carefully protected the interests of the crown and supported the just claims of the seigniors, he was equally the protector of the censitaires against seigniorial oppression and rapacity. When a seignior refused to grant lands at a reasonable rate, the intendant was empowered to make the grant over the seignior's head.² When he found seigniors exacting dues and services to which they did not appear entitled, he promptly forbade such exactions.³ When complaints were made that the seigniorial mill was defective or out of order, he did not hesitate summarily to order improvements.⁴ When he found that seigniors were exacting *corvée* labor during the busy seed-time and harvest seasons, he interdicted all seigniors from exacting more than one day's work at a time.⁵ Whenever it could be shown that seigniorial exactions, even though legal, were operating to the detriment of general colonial progress, his intervention might be sought, and usually with success, to secure their modification.⁶ The work of the intendant served appreciably to make the land-tenure system work smoothly; it was the failure of the British authorities after the conquest to continue this administrative jurisdiction that led to the development of many abuses.

The intendant was charged with a general supervision of the roads and bridges of the colony. The immediate supervision of construction and repair was, however, in the hands of an official known as the *grand voyer*, who was from time to time empowered by intendant's ordinance to command the personal labor (*corvée*) of the habitants in the work.⁷

Colonial industrial interests likewise demanded the intendant's

¹ These decrees are printed, under the title "Ordonnances des Intendants du Canada", in *Édits et Ordonnances*, II. 257-421.

² *Ibid.*, I. 326.

³ *Ibid.*, II. 440.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 340.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 444.

⁶ Raudot to Pontchartrain, November 10, 1707, *Correspondance Générale*, XXVI. 9 *et seqq.*

⁷ See, for example, *Édits et Ordonnances*, III. 176, 197, 216, 217, 284, 436, etc.

attention. That jealousy of industrial development which marked the policy of England toward her American colonies seems never to have characterized the policy of France toward Canada. It is of course true that in New France industry was such a puny infant that it gave the mother-land no cause for fear. At any rate the French government strove very earnestly to foster it by encouragements of various sorts, and committed the application of these stimulating agencies to the hands of the intendant. From time to time this official brought to the notice of the king the specific industrial needs of his colony, and rarely without meeting with ready response. Different intendants plied the patient sovereign with requests for tilers, brickmakers, potters, iron-workers, glass-makers, weavers, and so on; while one, less definite in his requests, asked for "all sorts of artisans". They also desired materials with which to get industries started. Champigny requested supplies of hemp-seed and flaxseed, in order that the raw materials of industry might be raised in the colony.¹ Hocquart asked for some fanning-mills, that the quality of flour produced in the seigniorial mills might be improved.² More often the intendant desired that some enterprising colonial might be assured of a monopoly in return for undertaking to start some particular industry. Still oftener the king was asked for a money bonus by his zealous agent, who never failed to point out how easy it would be for a certain industry to make progress were it only established. Under the spur of these various encouragements, one enterprising colonial established a tannery, another a hat factory, a third a shoemaking industry, and others started establishments for the making of potash and the curing of fish. Talon, who is often called the "Colbert of New France", was especially energetic, both by stimulus and by example, in promoting industry. With his private means he built a brewery at Quebec, besides establishing a tar manufactory and assisting in the promotion of various other enterprises.³ Of the other intendants, Raudot and Hocquart were conspicuous for their vigorous attempts to foster colonial industry.⁴

Despite these various encouragements, however, colonial industry would not thrive: in every case the enterprise seemed to famish when the royal pap was withdrawn. It is true that the benefits of en-

¹ Champigny to Minister, November 6, 1688, Correspondance Générale, VI. 389.

² Hocquart to Minister, October 4, 1731, *ibid.*, LIV. 43.

³ Chapais, *Jean Talon*, ch. xvi. The personal enthusiasm and enterprise of the intendant were strongly praised by Governor Frontenac in one of his despatches to the minister. See Frontenac to Colbert, November 2, 1672, Correspondance Générale, III. 327.

⁴ Cf. Claude Marie Raudot, *Deux Intendants du Canada sous Louis XIV.* (Auxerre, 1854), *passim*.

couragement were too often offset by the stringent police regulations imposed on the methods of industry; but the main obstacle was found in the superior profits of the fur-trade, which by its greater lucrativeness and its irresistible fascination drew into its vortex the best and most enterprising part of the colonial population.

Financial Powers.—In France one of the main duties of the provincial intendant was connected with the levy and collection of direct taxes. In the different classes of provinces (*pays d'état* and *pays d'élection*) his powers of supervision differed somewhat; but in general he was responsible for the collection of the imposts and for their transmission to Paris.¹ In New France, however, no direct taxes, either *taille* or *capitation*, were ever imposed; hence the intendant had no work in this direction. It is true that, by intendant's decree, special assessments were occasionally levied for the building of churches, presbyteries, roads, bridges, and fortifications; but these can scarcely be looked upon as constituting a system of direct taxation.

The colony of New France had, however, a system of indirect taxes levied both upon imports and upon exports. Down to 1748 taxes upon imports were confined to spirituous liquors and tobacco, while taxes upon exports were restricted to furs and hides. In 1748, however, a royal edict provided for the imposition of a uniform tax of three per cent. upon all other imports and exports, with the exception of certain enumerated commodities.² The immediate work of collecting these duties was in the hands of farmers of the revenue, but over their operations the intendant was supposed to maintain a watchful eye, preventing overcharges and hearing complaints in general. The amount paid into the colonial treasury from this *ferme du Canada* was almost invariably much below what was needed for the current expenditure of the colony. Consequently the king found it necessary each year to make good a substantial deficit, which was met partly by the despatch of money and goods to the colony, and partly by the issue of bills of exchange drawn by the intendant upon Paris and paid out of the royal treasury.

¹ Godard, *Les Pouvoirs des Intendants sous Louis XIV.*, ch. vii.

² *Édits et Ordonnances*, I. 591 *et seqq.* A good summary of the revenue system of New France is printed under the title: "An Account of the Duties that were paid in the Province of Quebec during the French Government thereof, on Brandy, Rum, and Wine, imported into the said Province, and on Dry Goods imported into, and exported out of, the same", in François Masères's *Collection of several Commissions . . . and other Papers relating to . . . Quebec* (London, 1772), No. 33.

Year by year the intendant sent home itemized accounts showing particulars of revenue and expenditure.¹

The intendant also acted as the general distributing and purchasing agent of the crown in the colony. It was customary, each autumn, to send home a list of the stores required for the maintenance of the forces in the country; and these supplies the home government forwarded in the following spring. On arrival at Quebec such stores were distributed under the supervision of the intendant to the various royal storekeepers, from whom they could be had by officers commanding the forces on presentation of the necessary requisitions. Since, however, the demand could not always be accurately stated in advance, it very frequently happened that things were needed which had not been sent out from France. In such cases the necessary supplies were purchased in the colony. The method of securing these differed somewhat from time to time, but during the last few decades preceding the loss of Canada it was the practice to permit officers commanding military posts or military expeditions to secure such additional supplies from merchants or traders by giving signed requisitions in return. These requisitions were then signed by the merchant, the local commissary, the commissary-general, and finally by the intendant, who made payment either in money or by giving bills of exchange on Paris—usually in the latter way. The requisitions were then kept by the intendant as vouchers, but there seems to have been no regular system of auditing them. Still, they passed through so many hands that fraud or extortion was scarcely possible without collusion on the part of several officials.²

Down to 1748 it does not appear that there was any marked corruption or dishonesty among the civil officials of the colony;³ but with the arrival of Bigot in that year a veritable carnival of peculation was inaugurated. Bigot proceeded to fill all the subordinate offices with men as dishonest as himself, so that fraudulent requisitions

¹ Many of these are preserved in the Correspondance Générale. They are, however, very complicated and difficult to analyze.

² Different intendants varied the system of distributing and purchasing supplies to such an extent that it is not easy to give an accurate outline of the methods pursued. Many details are given in the *Mémoire pour Messire François Bigot, ci-devant Intendant de Justice, Police, Finance, et Marine en Canada* (Paris, 1763), especially in part III.; in Antoine de Bougainville's "*Mémoire sur l'État de la Nouvelle France, à l'Époque de la Guerre de Sept Ans*", printed by Pierre Margry in his *Relations et Mémoires Inédits* (Paris, 1867), 37-84; and in the various despatches of Montcalm, Vaudreuil, and Bigot during the years preceding the conquest.

³ An anonymous "*Mémoire sur l'État présent du Canada*", dated February 15, 1712, and preserved in the Archives of the Marine, accuses the intendant, Jacques Raudot, of carrying on a private trade in wheat and salt. Correspondance Générale, XXXIII. 381. Complaints of this sort were, however, very rare.

tions might be readily certified. It was his aim to secure from France only a small portion of the supplies required for the colony, and to buy as much as possible in Canada. Most of the needed stores were purchased from the establishment of one Claverie at Quebec, a firm in which Bigot and many of his subordinates were silent partners and in the profits of which they shared largely. This establishment, popularly known as "La Friponne", had its branch at Montreal, and during the last ten years of French rule supplied goods to the amount of many millions of livres for the use of the troops. The stores were inferior and the prices charged were outrageously extortionate. The people of the colony were forced by intendant's ordinance to sell their grain to the Friponne at fixed prices, and the establishment then resold it to the king at famine rates. Bigot's dishonesty further appeared in his practice of letting contracts for the construction of public works, for the transportation of troops, and for various other public services, to favored contractors, who set their own prices and then disgorged part of their plunder to the intendant and his friends in high places. In fact, all the higher civil officials in the colony seem to have vied with one another in the work of turning public funds into private fortunes; and the amount of bills of exchange sent home annually ran up into the millions. The annals of colonial administration probably afford no parallel to the corruption of Bigot's intendency. It was, however, only after the loss of the colony, when the intendant and a score or more of his subordinates were placed on trial in France, that the enormity of their peculations was completely disclosed.¹

An additional temptation in the pathway of an intendant lay in the fact that to him was committed general charge of the system of colonial currency. In the early days, funds to pay the expenses of the colony were sent out in coin; but in 1685 these annual funds failed to arrive, and Meulles, "not knowing to what saint to make his prayers", hit upon the expedient of issuing a temporary card currency to serve until the coined money should come to hand. The experiment proved so disastrously successful that from time to time later intendants made successive issues, until the card money became a permanent factor in the colonial stock of circulating media. These

¹ The proceedings in the trial of Bigot, Péan, and others were subsequently published at Paris. They consist of a dozen or more *Procès, Mémoires, Réponses*, and other documents, the most elaborate of which is that containing the defense of Bigot, which fills over a thousand closely-printed pages. It was from these that Parkman drew his lucid account of the ongoing at Quebec during the last decade of French dominion (*Montcalm and Wolfe*, II.). The interesting story of "La Friponne" is told in William Kirby's *Chien d'Or* (New York, 1878).

cards were issued and signed by the intendant;¹ and in periods of military storm and stress, when expenses were extraordinarily heavy, the temptation to issue them in large quantities was naturally too great to be resisted. Through overissues and tardiness in redemption the card money depreciated so much in value that, during the years just prior to Wolfe's victory, the luckless colony fairly floundered in the slough of inconvertible paper. With the exception of Bigot, however, none of the intendants seem to have used the power of issuing card money to their own enrichment.²

Taken as a whole, the powers of the Canadian intendant were very extensive—vastly more extensive, indeed, than were those of any other official in the colony. His discretionary power was wide, and the great distance which separated him from his only superiors at Versailles made it necessary that he should use this power constantly and extensively. With a single important exception, the eleven intendants who actually performed the duties of their office in New France exercised their wide powers with moderation and judgment as well as with honesty. Duchesneau showed himself somewhat too combative in temperament, but it must be borne in mind that Frontenac afforded him ample provocation. Dupuy was rather untactful in his relations with his colleagues; and Beauharnois was scarcely long enough in the colony to permit one to judge of his capabilities as an administrator. Talon, Champigny, Meulles, Raudot, Bégon, and Hocquart, however, were all men who rose well to the responsibilities of their post. The first and last named not only possessed in a high degree both administrative skill and enthusiasm for the royal interests, but gave freely of their private means for the advancement of those interests.³ It is therefore hardly fair to say

¹ Some idea of the extent of the issues may be had from the fact that in 1730 some two thousand packs of cards were used. The intendant, Hocquart, in one of his despatches complained that the task of signing so many cards was tedious and that this work occupied the larger part of his spare time. After 1733 the intendant was relieved of this work, the card money henceforth bearing only the signature of the controller of the marine at Quebec.

² In addition to the card money, treasury notes for larger denominations were issued. Bigot, in 1748, arranged that these should be printed, and issued them in large quantities. The whole question of the currency system of the French period in Canada is elaborately discussed in Adam Shortt's articles on "Canadian Currency and Exchange under French Rule", in *Journal of the Canadian Bankers' Association*, 1898-1899, V. 271, 385, VI. 1, 147, 233; James Stevenson's "Card Money in Canada during the French Domination", Quebec Literary and Historical Society, *Transactions*, 1873-1875, pp. 84-112; Lareau's "Monnaie de Cartes au Canada", *Revue de Montréal*, II. 433-438; and N. E. Dionne's "La Monnaie Canadienne sous le Régime Français", in *Revue Canadienne*, XXIX. 30-32, 72-83.

³ Hocquart, it is recorded, furnished from his own means the funds for the erection of the church at Tadoussac in 1747. See Coquart's journal, in R. G. Thwaites, *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, LXIX. 137.

that "the intendant was quite apt to be a rare rascal",¹ because one man in a line of a dozen proved himself so conspicuously unworthy of the trust imposed in him by his sovereign at a critical time. Bigot's picturesque depravity has served too well to draw the attention of the casual student away from the faithful plodding of his honest predecessors in office.

The post of colonial intendant was almost unique in the scope of powers committed to it, and in the heavy demands constantly made alike upon the firmness, impartiality, tact, and integrity of its occupants. The more one studies both the office and the men, the more will one be impressed by the large and effective part played by the intendants in the drama of the old régime.

W. B. MUNRO.

¹ Thwaites, *France in America* (New York, 1905), 134.